

REMARKS

Status of the Claims

Claims 1-26 are pending, with claims 1, 14, and 24-26 being independent. Claims 1, 14, and 24-26 have been amended. Support for the amendments to claims 1, 14, and 24-26 can be found throughout the specification and claims as filed. No new matter has been added.

Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to reconsider and withdraw the outstanding rejections in view of the foregoing amendments and following remarks.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 1-13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph, as allegedly failing to comply with the written description requirement. Without conceding the propriety of the rejection, independent claim 1 has been amended to delete recitation of "the water being added being free of substantial quantities of hydrate inhibitors selected from the group of alcohols, glycols, and surfactant or polymeric hydrate inhibitors". Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112 is respectfully requested.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102/103

Claims 1-26 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly obvious over U.S. Patent Nos. 5,491,269, 6,222,083, and 6,194,622. Applicants respectfully disagree with the rejection; therefore, this rejection is respectfully traversed.

As noted in the Amendment filed on February 13, 2006, the present invention adds water to a hydrocarbon containing fluid to enhance the watercut of the hydrocarbon containing fluid. Sufficient water may be added such that, even though hydrates may form from hydrocarbon hydrate forming components in the hydrocarbon containing fluid, such hydrates cooperate with the added water to form a flowable slurry rather than allowing the hydrates to form a plug in the flow line. Thus, the cost of providing substantial quantities of expensive conventional hydrate inhibitors need not be incurred. Furthermore, the handling and disposal of these sometimes problematic hydrate inhibitors is thus minimized or avoided completely.

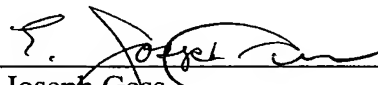
The claims have been amended to recite that the water cut enhanced hydrocarbon containing fluid consists essentially of hydrocarbon containing fluid, water, and optionally salt or brine. Consistent with the discussion in the specification, water added to the hydrocarbon containing fluid is the primary mechanism to prevent hydrate formation blockage in a flow line rather than relying on substantial quantities of hydrate inhibitors. The claimed invention therefore distinguishes over the cited references, which teach away from the invention as recited in the claims by teaching that hydrate inhibitors should be the source preventing hydrate formation and thus blockage in a flow line.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, reconsideration of the claims and allowance of the subject application is earnestly solicited. The favor of an interview prior to an action on the merits is respectfully requested in order that the foregoing points may be discussed in more detail with the Examiner. Accordingly, it is requested that the Examiner contact the undersigned attorney in order to schedule an interview once the Examiner has had an opportunity to review the present amendments.

Respectfully submitted,

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